

- Introduces Three Bills To Ensure Federal Government Won't Facilitate Power Line Project -

Monticello, NY – Congressman John Hall and Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today unveiled legislation he is introducing in the House that would effectively stop the New York Regional Interconnection, Inc. (NYRI) power line proposal from moving forward. The congressman is introducing three pieces of bipartisan legislation that aim to revise and amend the provisions set forth in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 in order to ensure that the federal government does not overrule local and state officials and force the NYRI project upon New York residents. Hall co-sponsored Hinchey authored two of the bills and is an original cosponsor of the third, which is authored by Congressman Frank Wolf (R-VA), who has a similar power line proposal pending in the congressional district in which he represents. Congressman John Hall (D-NY) and Congressman Michael Arcuri are cosponsoring all three bills with Hinchey.

NYRI is proposing to construct a nearly 200-milelong high voltage direct current (HVDC) electric transmission line from Oneida County to Orange County, New York. Hinchey believes the proposed project threatens the federally-protected Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River and would have serious adverse impacts on local communities along the proposed routes.

"The opposition by New York residents to NYRI's power line proposal is overwhelming. No one wants unsightly power lines cutting through the Upper Delaware Scenic River Valley or their backyard for that matter," Hinchey said. "These bills would prevent the federal government from stepping in on behalf of NYRI and forcing New York residents to live with this power line project. The federal government should be in the business of doing what's right for the people of New York and the entire country, not helping power companies make huge profits."

HALL/ARCURI QUOTES

The first bill Hinchey authored would outright repeal the section of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 that authorizes the U.S. Department of Energy to designate National Corridors and/or grant permits for projects in those corridors. The second bill, the Protecting Communities from Power Line Abuse Act, Hinchey authored and is introducing today would strip the ability of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to grant federal eminent domain authority to projects such as the one proposed by NYRI. That bill would in essence make it much more difficult, and probably impossible, for the NYRI proposal to proceed in the event New York State denies a permit. Even though FERC could theoretically permit the project, NYRI could not take private lands from unwilling sellers.

The third bill, which Hinchey is cosponsoring, is called the National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor Clarification Act. The measure has many provisions, but essentially ensures that areas which are recognized for their scenic, natural, cultural, or historic values, such as the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, are protected from electric corridors. The bill helps ensure local and state authorities have control over the final outcome and also allows for greater public input on such matters.

"Those of us introducing these bills recognize we need to act quickly in order to stop the federal

government from overruling local opposition to NYRI's project," Hinchey said. "That's why we're introducing legislation today and will be putting on a heavy press to move these bills and protect the quality of life for area residents. I look forward to using my new position on the House Natural Resources Committee to help advance this legislation, and will be talking about it with my colleagues on the House Energy and Commerce Committee as well."

The Energy Policy Act of 2005, which Hinchey opposed, included provisions to allow the federal government to overrule local opposition to power line proposals such as NYRI's. The Department of Energy is working towards the designation of National Corridors or National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors. The Corridors would recognize areas of electric transmission congestion and allow projects proposed in those corridors to apply to the federal government for permits if they are denied by state citing authorities.

Unless action is taken in Congress, New York residents could face a situation later this year in which the U.S. Department of Energy's FERC designates part of upstate New York as a National Corridor, as NYRI has requested and petitioned. Such a designation opens the possibility that in the event New York State denies or delays the permits for the NYRI power line due to the potential impacts or other concerns, FERC could then step in and issue permits for the project. Under the Energy Policy Act, this would also allow for the use of federal powers of eminent domain to acquire private lands in order to make the project possible.

Hundreds of local businesses, community and environmental organizations, elected officials, business groups and others in the communities along the path of this proposed line have come together to organize and fight to stop the NYRI proposal. Joining Hinchey at the press conference were: Christopher Cunningham, Sullivan County Legislative Chairman/Communities Against Regional Interconnect (CARI); Troy Bystrom, Upper Delaware Preservation Coalition (UDPC); Nina Guenste, SayNo2NYRI; and William Douglass, Upper Delaware Council (UDC).